Castlemaine Naturalist

February 2021

Vol. 46.1 #494

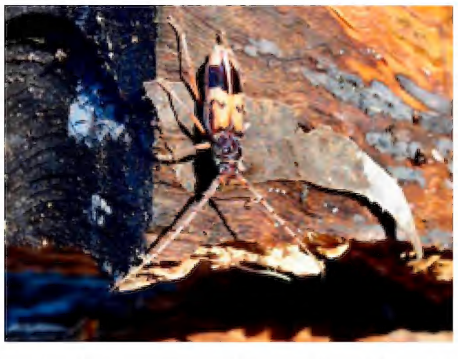
Monthly newsletter of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Imperial Hairstreak butterfly *Jalmenus evagoras*
photo by Euan Moore

Meeting report December 2020

The December meeting was our customary members night where members presented more detailed observations. Unlike previous years the meeting was conducted using zoom with members talking to their presentations which were screen-shared with the other attendees.

Jill Williams started the evening with a tawny frogmouth family that had been nested near her back door. It is amazing how the adults incubated the eggs during Antarctic-like sleet and cold and that the eggs hatched. The rudimentary nest was rather crowded with the female and two almost-fledged chicks. Both of the young fledged on 9 Nov 2020 and haven't been seen since.



Also from Jill's home was an insect rescued from the wood pile when collecting wood for the fire. I think it is the Eucalyptus Long-horned Borer (*Phoracantha semipunctata*).

Spring 2020 was a good season for orchids and they just seemed to keep coming. Judy Hopley presented several pictures, taken by David Elliot, of *Pterostylis maxima*, Large Rustyhood, at various locations in the Maldon area. Judy also had pictures of Spotted Hyacinth Orchid, *Dipodium pardalinum*, from Taradale Conservation Reserve while Richard Goonan had photos of Rosy Hyacinth Orchid, *D. roseum*, from Seventy Foot Hill Reserve in Castlemaine.

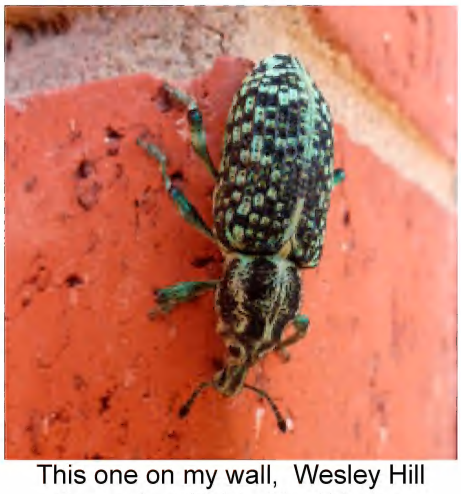
Pterostylis maxima – David Elliot

Dipodium pardalinum - Judy Hopley, *and Dipodium roseum* – Richard Goonan

Invertebrates featured in several presentations. An interesting cocoon protected by a lacework of fine hairs is a Clouded Footman, *Anestia ombrophanes*. The hairs surrounding the cocoon are from the caterpillar. The adult is a black and white moth. Cathrine Harboe-Ree was able to show all three life stages.

Continuing this theme, Euan Moore showed three life stages of the Imperial Hairstreak, *Jalmenus evagoras.* [cover photo] Like most butterflies in the Blue family, this species has a symbiotic relationship with ants, in this case *Iridiomyrmex sp* which tend and protect the caterpillars and pupae. The adults are moderately large and like all blues have distinctive markings on the underside of the wings. This

butterfly feeds on wattles, in this case, young blackwoods in the Castlemaine Botanic Gardens.



This one on my wall, Wesley Hill December 2014 - Noel Young

Another insect with a story was the Botany Bay Weevil, *Chrysolopus spectabilis,* with a photo by Geraldine Harris. This weevil was first collected at Botany Bay during Cook's voyage in 1770, possibly by Joseph Banks or Daniel Solander. It was formally described by Danish insect taxonomist, Johann Fabricius in 1775. It was one of the first Australian insects to be scientifically described. Another specimen of this weevil was seen a few weeks later along Forest Ck by Denis Hurley and members of the Castlemaine Landcare Group. This species is found across much of south-east Australia.

Several people including Nina Tsilikas, Geraldine Harris and Judy Hopley presented a range of flowers that had been seen in the region over recent weeks.

Nina also showed some of the activity at a not-quite-right tree hollow near her home at Shepherd Flat. The prospective tenants included Wood Duck, Long-billed Corella, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and Gang Gang Cockatoo.

Reptiles for the evening included a large group of Eastern Long-necked Tortoise, *Chelodina longicollis,* from the Loddon, seen by Kerrie Jennings and a Lace Monitor, *Varanus varius,* from western Victoria in a movie clip from a wildlife camera shown by Jenny Rolland. The later was the only sighting from the property in 15 years.

For something completely different George Broadway presented a selection of photos from the Warrnambool area showing the changes over time. These included a view from the town looking out over Lake Pertobe towards the port showing the area as farmland and later being transformed into urban park and wetlands. A pair of photos of London Bridge at Port Campbell were before and after the collapse of the main arch. Equally dramatic were the changes at Tower Hill as revegetation works have transformed the cleared hillsides from introduced grasses to a young forest. The forest is still growing and the habitat for native fauna and flora is continuing to improve.

Noel Young showed a selection of local bird, flower and insect photos taken over the bountiful spring of 2020.

The grand finale for the evening was a short movie prepared by Geoff Harris. Geoff and Geraldine have had a wildlife camera set up to monitor a nest box at their home at Barkers Ck. Over several months the nest box was visited by several different possum species. Geoff combined the short movies to make a longer presentation showing each of the possums and their behaviour around the nest box.

- Euan Moore

Wildlife Observations for February (1943)

George Broadway

These Wildlife magazines are mostly ones I rescued when they were being thrown out by a library. Others I have found in Junk shops etc. It seems a pity that so many interesting articles should be lost. In the February 1943 number I found two articles of local interest. The first I will quote:-

"Sometimes in quite unpromising surroundings one will come across an item of botanical interest. It is necessary therefore to always be on the alert. In the dry Spring of 1938, at the head of a rocky gully between Fryerstown and Elphinstone, where the natural resources would be taxed to support one bandicoot to 5 acres, I was elated to find several plants of the rare **Twin-flower Beard-heath**. At first sight it could be easily mistaken for one of the Epacris heaths but its genus is *Leucopogon.*

A small straggling shrub, with branches up to three feet in length, was blooming profusely. The flowers were white and arranged closely along the stem in pairs. Owing probably to the extremely dry conditions, only a single seedling was found, which is now a prized shrub in a suburban wildflower garden. This species has been recorded in only four widely scattered areas in Victoria." (Our readers will no doubt recall the magnificent display during the last spring, when whole hillsides in the vicinity of Tunnel Hill were white with hundreds of this plant. The article identifies it as *L. biflorus*, but its name has since been changed to *L. fletcheri*.)

Leucopogon fletcheri, close up
Photo by Noel Young

The second item of interest to local readers was in a large article by Crosbie Morrison on swans, ducks and geese. After describing the Australian members of the Order *Anseriformes* with several photographs (all in B & W in those days), he included a photograph of domestic geese for comparison. The interest in this photo is that was taken by the noted resident of Castlemaine A.M.E. Bale, some of whose works may be seen in our Art Gallery. Additional interest lies not in the geese but that in the background may be seen the old Chinese Joss-house which once stood near Forest Creek.

In February 1943 a Japanese plane flew over Sydney after being launched from a submarine. Several ships had been sunk by Japanese subs, which was causing some concern.

Readers of "Wildlife" however had not been idle, there were many specimens and queries from readers. As usual many of the specimens sent for identification had been sent in previously. (and described in our Newsletter)
Here is a selection; there were too many to include them all.

Insects

Kanya: A wingless cockroach often called a "Blackbeetle" in error because cockroaches are not beetles but more closely related to grasshoppers.

Northcote: Firewood beetle *Phorocantha,* often sent in. Apparently it often arrived in Melbourne in firewood which was used by most people.

Harrow: Silvertail Fly, one of the Bee Fly family, *Bombylidae* some of which resemble bees in form and colour. They are good citizens laying their eggs on other more harmful insects. This one is velvety black with black opaque wings and has a tail tuft of glistening silver white hairs which flash in the sun. It does not seem to be very common.

Glenorchy: Vine Hawk Moth caterpillar, often sent in. see Feb 18.
Also Nurcoung, Elwood

Ascot Vale: Wattle Goat Moth. One of our largest moths; see March '17.

Sunshine: Convolvulus Hawk Moth – also frequent. Apr '17.
Also Gerang Gerung , Warracknabeal, Newport.

Nth Melb: A very large cockroach.

Dingley: Your "ant" is the familiar "Blue Ant" *Diamma bicolor* which is actually a wingless wasp and packs a formidable sting which they use to sting harmful grubs.
Also Colac

Ascot Vale: Fleas, two males and one female.

Dandenong: Grey & Gold Elephant Beetle Mar '17. One of the larger weevils which attack plants and often eat both roots and foliage.

Ferny Creek: Apple Hanging Moth which hangs by the front legs from twigs of apple trees. The larva, a typical *Hepialid* or Ghost Moth grub bores into the wood of the tree. Your specimen, a male, has light green wings with a design in silver-white, the female has pink markings on light fawn wings.

Stawell: Larva of a Lacewing fly, the Aphis Lion. June '16. Known as the "Old Clothes Man" because it attaches the empty shells of its victims to its back as camouflage. Desirable in the garden as it eats many aphis.

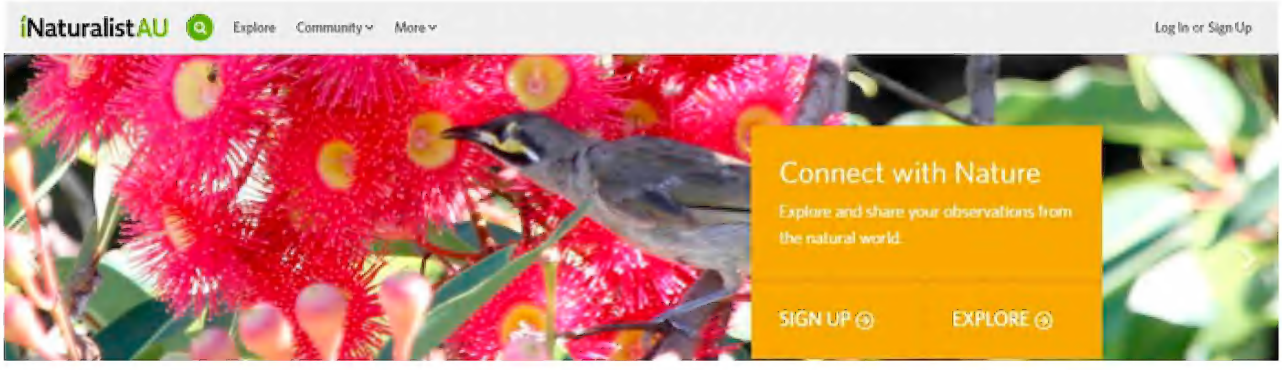
Nyarrin: Caterpillar of the "Drinker Moth" or "Snout Moth" see Dec'16

Northcote: "Chinese Junk" larva of a Cup Moth *Doratifera.* Normally feeds on Eucalypt leaves so who knows why it would be on a poppy.

Main Ridge: The creatures in your tank are mosquito larvae or "Wrigglers". A few drops of paraffin will fix them.

Balgowlah NSW: The insects from the scarlet flowering gum were the little steel-black, white-spotted Cicadella, a close relative of the much larger cicadas and leafhoppers. They are sap-suckers and exude excess sap as a sugary secretion which attracts ants.

Swan Hill: The beetles from the lawn were cockchafers. It is their larvae, whitish grubs which damage the lawn by eating the roots.



iNaturalist Workshop

Getting started with iNaturalist - How to make your observations count!

Date: Sunday 21 February 2-4 pm (with the option of a second workshop for those unable to attend at this time – see below)

iNaturalist is a citizen science project which collects sightings of flora and fauna on a global basis and allows others to assist with confirming IDs. Once validated, records for Australia are passed on to the Atlas of Living Australia which is managed by CSIRO and the various state and national museums.

Euan Moore will run a small informal workshop which will enable people to get started with iNaturalist and learn how to record their sightings of flora and fauna in a way that contributes to distribution records as well as our knowledge of the natural world. During the year there will be opportunities for members to participate in 'bioblitz' projects for the club.

Topics covered.

- What is iNaturalist and how does it work.
- How does it relate to other flora and fauna databases.
- Setting up your log-on and user profile.
- Adding records.
- Identifying species.
- How are species IDs verified.
- Searching in iNaturalist.
- CFNC projects.

This will be a hands-on workshop where you will learn how to use iNaturalist to record your observations and to identify other people's observations.

This workshop will be held in a private home as we need internet access for the practical session.

Numbers are strictly limited to meet COVID distancing requirements and to keep within the maximum capacity of the room where we will be working.

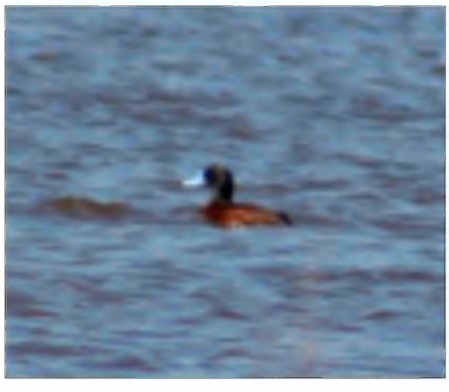
Bookings essential: calamanthus5@bigpond.com

If you are not able to attend on this date but would like to join the workshop, please contact Euan on the above email address and a second workshop may be organised.

Photo Observations

Rosemary and Peter Turner:

On 6th January at Picnic Point, Cairn Curran, we saw six adult White-Breasted Woodswallows, and one juvenile. On 20th January, during a walk around Barkers Creek Reservoir with our grandsons, Peter saw a Blue-billed Duck - last reported there on Birdata in 1988. Ten year old keen bird observer Tom's photo is fuzzy but shows the bright blue bill. Not seen on a return visit on 27th when there was a strong south wind.



Euan Moore - Evidence of Rakali in Forest Ck.

The attached photo is of a probable Rakali feeding platform. It was taken along Forest Ck at one of the deep pools behind Bests Motors. Rakali will catch their aquatic prey such as yabbies and freshwater mussels and bring them to a safe place to consume at their leisure. This is often on protruding rocks or logs away from the banks of the river or lake. This one appears to have been dining on yabbies. We've seen similar feeding platforms when canoeing at Barmah and at Hattah.

Richard Goonan

07/01/2021, **Chestnut-rumped Heathwren**, 69 Diamond Gully Rd Castlemaine. Imagine my surprise, and then delight, when an unexpected visitor passed through the video image captured by a trail camera that had been placed to monitor an artificial water source. Although the Heathwren is known for the Castlemaine area, most records that appear in the ALA are scattered closer to Maldon through the Muckleford Forest area. Records close to Castlemaine are few, and this record in an area adjacent to the urban environment is interesting. These illusive birds are well known to be difficult to detect, I'll be looking closely to learn more about their activity at this location.

Distribution of the Hyacinth Orchid*

December 2020, *Dipodium roseum* (Hyacinth Orchid), Seventy Foot Hill Reserve (formerly Newstead Gravel Reserve), Guildford Bushland Reserve, Harcourt Bushland Reserve, Ranters Gullly Rd. Although a common and widespread species throughout the upland and coastal parts of Victoria, the distribution of the Hyacinth orchid is much more restricted locally. A scattering of records occur in the ALA, and after enquiring within the club I became aware of several other know local sites. I was surprised in early December to find the species flowering at the Seventy Foot Hill Reserve (along Diamond Gully Rd) which turned out to be a new local record for the species. Despite the species distribution elsewhere, it adds significantly to the value of this small parcel of public land. Upon further searches through the reserve, many plants were found in this area, as well as several within the nearby roadside. I had not previously known the species to grow in heavy gravelly substrates and was curious to investigate if the record was an anomaly, or if the species occurred in other local areas of White Hills Gravels. After searching at Harcourt and Guildford at sites with the same geology I did find further specimens. These records represent an unusual occurrence for the species. On Mt Alexander where the species occurs, they flowered much later at the typical or expected time, in early to mid-January. While driving along Ranters Gully Rd I also found a specimen on the roadside here.

*For photos see top of page 2

Noel Young

12/1/21
Collared Sparrowhawks in the CBG. Two flying young birds (pictured) perching very high in the tall Radiata Pines on the western hill - being attended by two adults with brief visits.

Judy and Phil Hopley

Lobelia rhombifolia growing in small groups along the Tatt Town Track late December

Birds of Sutton Grange January 2021

Nigel Harland

Superb Fairywren
Australian Magpie
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
Crimson Rosella
Red Wattlebird
Grey Shrikethrush
Collared Sparrowhawk
Spotted Pardalote
Red-browed Finch
Australian Raven
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
New Holland Honeyeater
Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Red-rumped Parrot
Yellow-rumped Thornbill
White-browed Scrubwren
Laughing Kookaburra
Long-billed Corella
Welcome Swallow
Galah
Common Bronzewing
Striated Pardalote

Speaker for February: Peter Turner

15 days in the WA Outback – Desert tracks, Stunning Wildflowers and Birds

In September 2018 I joined 5 others and our 2 leaders/naturalists/drivers for a 15 day camping tour from Perth, through the goldfields to Laverton, then east along the Annie Beadell “highway” to remote Neale Junction, then south on the Connie Sue highway to Rawlinna on the Trans Australia Railway. The “desert” was full of flowers, with fascinating changes in the mix of geology, trees and plant species. Then south across the Nullarbor to Cocklebiddy and the Eyre Bird Observatory, much of the country recovering from recent severe fires. The route back to Perth had to be changed after heavy rain closed the Granite Woodlands Trail to Hyden, so we returned on an arc north of Perth seeing different but equally interesting country. Join me on an illustrated tour of a slice through stunning WA outback country.

From your Committee

New Year Greetings! We hope that 2021 will see more activities arranged for club members, especially in field trips/excursions around our region.

We have decided that General Meetings with Guest Speakers will continue online using Zoom for the time being. The number of people that can attend meetings in the Fellowship Room at the Uniting Church is limited under current restrictions, and vaccination is still some way off. So our February 12th meeting will be on Zoom. Weather permitting, our first excursion will be on Saturday 13th, to Tullaroop Reservoir.

The Committee is recommending that membership fees are unchanged for 2021. The following motion will be put to members at the February meeting:

> That membership fees for 2021 remain the same as for 2020: Single membership $35, Family $50, Pensioner/Student/Single Concession $25, Family Pensioner/Student/Concession $30.
> Moved Geoff Harris Seconded Peter Turner

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday March 12th at 7.30 pm. All positions on the committee will be open, so you are encouraged to consider joining the committee. Nomination forms are included with this newsletter.

We are looking for **speakers for our monthly meetings**, especially for later in the year – suggestions or offers to present a talk are welcome – contact a member of the committee.

Field Trip – Tullaroop Reservoir, Saturday February 13

Leaders – Euan Moore and Jenny Rolland

Meet at the car park opposite the Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp or at the Tullaroop Reservoir picnic ground at the dam wall at 2pm.

Watch out for raptors as you drive across the Moolort Plains to the reservoir!
After gathering at the picnic ground, we will take a short drive to where we will park and then walk along the shore of the lake and in nearby bushland. Afterwards we will drive back to the picnic ground for afternoon tea. There is a toilet block at the picnic ground.

Bring binoculars, sunhat, block-out, hand sanitiser, water and snacks and wear stout walking shoes.

To comply with Government COVID-safe requirements:

- Register with your name and phone number on the sheet provided at the meeting point
- Wear a face-mask if you car-pool
- Maintain social distancing of 1.5 m
- Carry a face-mask at all times for when you can't distance safely
- Do not share food or drink with others
- Maintain good hand hygiene with soap and water or sanitiser
- DO NOT attend if you are feeling unwell or have the slightest symptoms of respiratory illness

The Field Trip is likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions.
There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club

COMING EVENTS

Monthly meetings will continue to be held on-line via ZOOM until further notice, commencing at 7.30 pm. If you have registered for our previous webinar meetings you will be sent the link for registering with Zoom. If you have not joined before and wish to attend, please email Peter Turner at munrodsl@iinet.net.au

Our guest speaker will follow the usual 'observations' session when members can share recent interesting sightings with an option to show a photo or two. If you have photos to be shown please email JPEG file(s) to Euan Moore at calamanthus5@bigpond.com by Noon on the day of the meeting.

Field Trips/Excursions will be held this year (subject to any changes in Covid restrictions) on the Saturday afternoon after the monthly meeting. Meet at the Octopus (opposite the motel in Duke St) for departure at 1.30

Friday February 12th meeting: Speaker Peter Turner: Through the WA desert to Eyre Bird Observatory

Saturday February 13th: Field Trip to Tullaroop Reservoir

Monday February 15th: Roadside cleanup Organiser Geoff Harris. 9am start at the corner of Golf Links road on the Pyrenees Highway. Garbage bags and reflective vests will be supplied. Please note KABC rules prohibit anyone under 16 from working on the roadside.

Friday March 12th: Annual General Meeting. Speaker to be announced

Business meetings - third Thursday of each month, are being conducted online.

Club website (Web master: Ron Wescott) - http://castlemainefnc.wordpress.com/

Castlemaine Naturalist - email newsletter material to: newsletter.cfnc@gmail.com

*Deadline for the March edition is 26th of February.

Subscriptions for 2020
Ordinary membership: Single $35, Family $50
Pensioner or student: Single $25, Family $30
Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

2020 Committee

President:	vacant	
Vice President:	Dianne Thomson	
Secretary:	Peter Turner	5470 6891
Treasurer:	Geoff Harris	0418 392183
Editors:	Noel Young 5472 1345,	Jenny Rolland 0400 565 092
Committee:	George Broadway	5472 2513
	Euan Moore	0407 519 091
	Richard Piesse	0448 572 867

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc. PO Box 324, Castlemaine, 3450.
Inc #A0003010B